

Woodman Building  
140 Middle Street  
Portland  
Cumberland County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-136

HABS  
ME  
3-PART,  
26-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WOODMAN BUILDING

HABS No. ME-136

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Location: 140 Middle Street, Portland, Cumberland County,  
Maine

Present Owner: Heirs of Charles Cook of Cook, Everett and  
Pennell, Co.

Present Use: Wholesale drug company.

Significance: Complete, well-preserved, and flamboyant facade.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1867. The Middle Street facade contains a cartouche announcing "Woodman Building 1867." An ad in the Portland Daily Press, Friday, October 25, 1867, announced the opening of the newly completed building.

" 1867 Spring 1867  
Woodman, True and Co.,  
Having this day removed to the spacious  
warehouse erected upon  
THEIR OLD SITE  
No. 54 & 56 MIDDLE STREET  
Would respectfully invite the attention  
of purchasers of their large, new, and  
attractive stock of  
DRY GOODS  
Woolens and Small Wares.  
Agents to Maine for  
Grey's Patent Molded Collar... for  
Singer Sewing Machine.  
Woodman, True, & Co."

2. Architect: "Geo. M. Harding/Architect" is embossed on the base of the column, corner of Pearl and Middle Streets, on the Middle side. "The two Fassets, French H., and Edward F.—father and son—with Harding, are all we have to depend on among our townsmen, chiefly, for architectural embellishment," Portland's chronicler John Neal mentioned (Portland Illustrated, W. S. Jones, Portland, 1874, p. 25). George Harding did the First Universalist Church west of High Street on Congress Square, the old Portland High School on Cumberland Ave. and remodeled the Natural History Museum before the fire, among other things.

3. Original and subsequent owners: George W. Woodman of Woodman and True Co., built it. He sold it to Cook, Everett and Pennell, apparently between 1888 and 1895. (Woodman and True still occupied the building in 1888 according to Hull's Handbook of Portland, Southwell and Bros. Portland, 1888, p. 137, but Cook, Everett and Pennell occupied it by 1896 according to their catalog of that year.) Charles Cook bought out Everett and Pennell about 1929 and the building has remained in his family.
4. Builders, original plans, etc: Unknown.
5. Alterations and additions: Extensive changes have been made on the inside: partitions have been removed, capitals of many iron columns have been taken off and half another floor has been added between the first and second stories. The three offices in the back of the first floor still exist, and also some of the moldings which were along the top of the old shelves, and along which hanging ladders ran. There were apparently stairs from the first to second floors in the back center of the section west of the firewall near the offices, and mahogany stairs to the second floor, forward of these. The floor level was raised three steps just before the back east-west stairs, judging from an old photo. Built-in safes with wood-grained and textured gothic-style doors, on the first floor, still exist, but one is not used. The west and north walls of the basement were pierced by windows opening to trenches for ventilation but these were blocked up about 1915.

A photograph of the exterior shows that originally the two chimneys bore more ornate brickwork, the four rounded pavilions of the mansard roof were crowned with iron grill work about four feet high, as was the central section on Middle Street. Stone balustrades weighted the bases of the mansard pavilions, and finials arose from the corners of the balustrades. Volutes two or three feet high widened the base of the five other (outside the pavilions') mansard dormers. At the top of the mansard roof was a deep and elaborate molding. The second and third floors were as they are now. The first story, on Middle Street, consisted of two tall windows on each corner, under the mansard pavilions. They bracketed a sequence of five doorways alternating with four tall windows. The Pearl street facade had balustrades across the windows flanking the central door. Names of firms using the building occupied less space than now, but "Woodman and True" was written on most of the windows.

In an 1896 drawing all these details are retained, and, in addition, a partition wall, four bays from the right on the Middle Street facade, protrudes several feet through the mansard

roof. This firewall appears to have always been inside the building, and to have been carried through the roof for better fire protection.

In a photo of about 1915 all these details are gone except the fire wall--no iron work, balustrades, finials, volutes, or moldings on the roof; no window wells or balustrades on Pearl Street. Also, on Middle Street, the third bay from the left has been changed from doorway to window. At present the seventh bay from left on Middle Street has also been changed to a window, leaving only three doorways apparent. On the second floor front was a toilet. The partitions around it were pasted over the cartoons, political drawings, posters, and advertisements, in color and up to three feet high, of the mid-and late 19th century.

B. Historical Context:

John Neal's Account of the Great Conflagration in Portland ... and a New Business Guide, published in 1866 immediately after fire devastated the business portion of the city, says "The largest losers are...Woodman, True, and Co..." etc. (mentioning about 25 firms). The firm of Cook, Everett and Pennell was begun in 1852 by Walter F. Phillips, who became associated with Charles Cook in 1868. Charles Cook, E. S. Everett, and H. B. Pennell incorporate in 1887. Cook bought out the other two men in 1929.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An excellent example of late 19th century commercial architecture, baroque in design, with a flamboyant use of cast iron, limestone, brick and slate. Especially valuable is the facade treatment of street elevations, at ground floor, window surrounds and slate mansard roof, and dormers.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent with only minor exterior revisions the interior has been extensively remodeled.

B. Description of Exterior: This is a three-and-a-half story brick and iron building with stone and metal trim, rectangular in plan on a northeast corner lot.

1. Foundations: Masonry walls on bed rock and hard pan.

2. Walls: Bearing wall of red brick, limestone (buff) trim.
3. Structural system, framing: Post and beam, wall bearing masonry.
4. Porches: None.
5. Chimneys: Red brick with corbelled caps.
6. Openings: First floor street elevations consist of granite piers with iron screen panels between, iron base and pairs of engaged columns, and flat round arches. Glazed sash and doorways.

- a. Doorways and doors: Southeast (Middle Street), three doorways are recessed in typical bays approximately 3'-0" above grade, iron steps with glass inserts, two doors per opening, glazed and paneled. Overdoor glazed with transom above.

Service door, Pearl Street. Overhead door wood paneled, paneled overdoor.

- b. Windows and shutters:

First floor, four large fixed glasses, two overhead per opening.

Second floor, wood and masonry surrounds, two DH windows, 1/1, per opening separated by two engaged columns (wood). Projecting masonry coping at window head. Elaborate wood and masonry head decoration.

Third floor, DH 2/2, elaborate head decoration, sills and corbelled stone course; three round head windows at corner bays.

Dormers in mansard roof, lower pitch; 1-3 windows per dormer, arched and flat round heads, DH 6/6, 4/4 and 10/6.

Windows in southwest (Pearl Street) elevations less complicated but similar to those in the southeast facade. Flat and round arched openings. First floor windows have round heads with tracing in top sash.

Metal shutters northeast (rear) elevation, only. Light wells at side walk level are masonry with glass inserts.

7. Roof: Mansard roof, slate shingles, wood and metal dormers, wood and metal trim. Bracketed wood cornice, brackets in pairs, heavy wood patterned molding.
  8. Fire escape: Iron ladder and railing, north elevation.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans:
    - a. Basement: Storage and mechanical equipment.
    - b. First floor: Plan divided unequally by fire walls; two major entrances on Middle Street, one into each space, minor entrance and service entrance from Pearl Street. Offices and storage spaces defined by modern partitions and storage cabinets.
    - c. Half-floor between original first and second floor.
    - d. Second, third and fourth floors divided by partitions, storage bins and fire wall.
  2. Stairways: None of importance. Stairs to basement and floors above.
  3. Flooring: Wood boards and strips with plastic tile and miscellaneous floor covering.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
  5. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: Generally four panel wood doors, pairs of wood doors six lights each, heavy molded trim. pairs of iron fire doors, some textured and painted to resemble wood.
  6. Decorative features and trim:

Fluted cast iron columns with Corinthian caps, first and second floors.

Fragments of cabinet cornices, balusters, beam cornices, and glazed office partition.

Cartoons and drawings posted on walls and ceiling of 3rd floor toilet, depicting President Grant, Buffalo Bill, etc.

7. Hardware:

Principal door hardware.

Tracks for hanging ladders providing access to high shelves first floor.

8. Lighting: Modern electric.

9. Heating: Steam.

D. Site:

The structure is located on the north east corner of Pearl and Middle Streets in a commercial area, adjacent to another masonry and iron building of similar character and age. Brick sidewalks at both streets. There is a modern metal shed at the first floor north elevation and a brick out building at the northwest corner of a service yard.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Early Views: A photo down Middle Street, late 19th century, shows the building in its setting (Maine Historical Society). Cook, Everett and Pennell owns the following views: a photo, before 1881 and likely late '60's, from the rubble catty-corner the building; a photo about 1915 or 1920, from trolley wires and tracks; a photo before 1896 of Cook, Everett and Pennell's first floor facade before they moved to the Woodman Building---they were directly across the street from it and its reflection is seen in the plate glass windows. Also in an 1896 catalog of the company, in the company's possession, are drawings of the building from the southwest, and photos: of the main office and counting room with its high glass partitions, businessmen and secretaries; of a section of a laboratory; of the main floor showing east-west stairs in front of the office wall, and cast iron columns; of a section of the main floor and order dept. showing old mahogany stairs, high shelves and their cornices, two rows of columns, and a change of floor level near the stairs.

B. Bibliography:

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